

mittee; you used to stand up to Al Haig and say you didn't work for the President and you didn't go along with a lot of what Richard Nixon wanted you to do. Rich Bond now is favoring your candidacy, calling Pat Buchanan, accusing him of race-baiting. Is that fair?

Q. Could you do this at the mike, sir?

Q. We can't hear you.

*The President.* Well, good, because I'm not going to answer it. [Laughter] I think the President is seen to be the titular head of the party. It's always been that way. And just like I support incumbent Senators and Congressmen, I think it would be appro-

priate that the national committee support the President. And I supported—what?

Q. You stood up to Al Haig. Al Haig asked you to do things at the RNC that you didn't want to do.

*The President.* That's quite different than endorsing the President. I worked very hard for President Nixon when he was President, as chairman of the national committee.

*Note: The President's 123d news conference began at 10:34 a.m. in the Briefing Room at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this news conference.*

## Remarks to the American Society of Association Executives

March 11, 1992

Chairman Fondren, fellow Texan, thank you for that introduction. May I salute President Taylor and all the award winners here today. I heard a story about how when Lyndon Baines Johnson moved from the House to the Senate, Jake Pickle and Gene Fondren, then Texas State legislators, flipped a coin to decide who'd run for office and go to Washington. Well, Congressman Pickle's been calling for a rematch ever since. [Laughter] And this organization is very fortunate to have as its chairman a man of this strength and a man of this conviction.

Robert Frost once wrote that an idea is a feat of association. Well, association is an idea as old as the American dream itself. Actually, de Tocqueville 150 years ago, more than that, had much to say about you. He said, "At the head of some new undertaking in the United States you will be sure to find an association." Well, since that time, associations have played a vital role in our country's progress, and they continue that mission today, defining new frontiers and exploring new territory.

Before I spoke, President Taylor handed out the Associations Advance America Awards to salute those who've found a way to help, to be, in fact, Points of Light. We hear too often about what's wrong in Amer-

ica. Well, this is what's right about America, and I salute you for what you are doing to help your communities. And again, I single out the awardees here who have starred in all of this.

Of course, it's an election year. Independent of the current preoccupation with the hype and spin of the campaigns, there will remain the issues, the big things, the core concerns of every American that transcend political party or philosophical ideology: jobs, family, peace. They hold us together as a society. They are more than issues we bring to the next election; they are the legacy we must give to the next generation.

And really, that's what I want to talk to you about today, not just the issues but our mood as a Nation and how we must act now if we're to change America for the better. Today, weighing most heavily in the hearts and on the minds of Americans is the state of our economy: jobs, preserving jobs, creating jobs. You in this room know best, virtually every industry and every profession in America. I don't have to tell you that people are worried about the future.

Frankly, we've had tough economic times before, with higher unemployment but less national alarm. There's something different about today's times, something that touches

a nerve. It strikes at the heart of what drives this country forward, our very confidence. It challenges our belief in ourselves.

Let me give it to you straight: Unemployment is, what, 7.3 percent, about 9 million people out of a total work force of 126 million. During the 1982 recession, 10 years ago, unemployment hit almost 11 percent, a level not experienced since the Great Depression. So we ask ourselves, why is confidence today lower than at the depth of the 1982 recession? I've heard a lot of theories. Some say those TV analysts are the problem, rejoicing in bad news. Others say, "Well, it's the politicians." I myself have noted that in a political year candidates often shower the voters with a message so bleak and hopeless, and at the same time they promise the rainbow if they're elected. That steady drizzle on the people's shoulders can wear away confidence and can wash away hope. So, it's easy to suppose that the constant drumbeat about what's wrong in America is a self-fulfilling prophecy.

There may be some truth to that. But I think there are other reasons for our country's mood. People are feeling the way they do because America's got some real problems. They're serious, stubborn, national problems. But I think it would be unfair and certainly untrue to suggest to the American people that we can't overcome these problems, to imply that the United States of America is a country in decline. So today I want to talk about what we must do to meet the economic challenge that is before us, how we can build economic vitality into our communities, how we must ensure that our children see a future that is an improvement over the present.

Sometimes it helps to take some of these enormous issues and bring them down to the personal level. So, when I talk about America's economic problems, this is what I mean: They are the worries of parents who have worked all their lives to get their kids through college, and those kids can't find work. They are found in discouraged families who can't afford to pay off anything but the interest on their credit cards month after month after month. They are the doubts of young people who believe that times will never be as good for them as

they were for their parents. Now, these are the things that dim our hope and drain our confidence.

American workers can see that technology and competition are changing the workplace faster than ever before. They can feel the heat, both at home and abroad. They know American industry is being challenged to keep up or step aside. I'm going to talk further about that later in the week out in Detroit, Michigan. We live in a competitive world, and people worry about our ability to compete.

American homeowners—that's almost 70 million people—worry that the biggest asset they will ever have, their home, will lose its worth because real estate values have declined. The same is true of any business, of association, or charitable organization that owns property; they're concerned, too.

Finally, as I discussed earlier this week with the League of Cities—and this one is fundamental—the deterioration of the American family is very, very serious, a root problem with tremendous ramifications for our economic well-being as a Nation.

These are the problems, but the picture is not all gloom and doom. America, we're now the only superpower in the world. Millions of immigrants still look to us as the land of opportunity because we are. We're the undisputed leader of the world that has a propensity for much more peace. And our economy is poised for recovery. Inflation is down; interest rates, low. Inventories are low; exports, at record highs. But this recovery will come sooner and stronger only if we in Government can come together and act now.

In January, as most of you know, I sent a message to the Congress, a plan of action. I felt it was a straightforward set of initiatives based upon tried and true economic realities. I proposed incentives for business to buy equipment, upgrade their plants, and start hiring again. I proposed a shot in the arm to get the housing industry back on its feet, lead us into economic recovery this spring. I proposed a cut on the capital gains.

And then I offered a broader plan of action to keep us strong and economically vigorous in the years ahead. And that in-

cluded, as some of you all may remember, education reform, we call it America 2000, to bring the skills of our future workers up to a standard of excellence. It included a clampdown on excessive regulations that hurt our competitiveness and reform of our legal system, so that Americans can spend more time innovating and less time litigating. And I proposed record Federal support, research and development support, to keep our Nation on the cutting edge of new technologies, new incentives for business investment. I proposed a forward-looking trade policy that demands foreign markets open up to high-quality American goods and services. And I reiterated our determination to hold the line on Government spending and oppose new taxes.

Well, big issues, big challenges. This is the plan I proposed, and I set a deadline for the Congress to act. And while the Congress didn't have a comprehensive plan of its own, it didn't like the notion of a deadline. Instead, with great and earnest deliberation, the Congress fixated on how much more to tax the American people. And they would hike taxes by \$100 billion. And that plan, in my view, destroys jobs, whereas the plan, the incentives I've outlined here create jobs. The last thing that this economy needs now is a massive tax increase. Any economist worth his salt will tell you that. But this is not new. Congress refuses routinely to take action to stimulate the economy, but insists on these job-destroying increases in taxes.

Everyone knows that Government is too big and spends too much. Everyone knows that. And there's something else everyone knows, too: Too often Congress spends the money of its customer, the taxpayer, the wrong way, inefficiently, ineffectively, without accountability, and frankly, without compassion. So again, I would like to call on the Congress to pass my plan by March 20 for the good of this economy and the good of the American people. Now, I realize this all may sound like simply an election year blast at the Congress controlled by the opposition party. But it is not. We really need a new way of looking at things.

And I have made proposals to bring back responsibility and accountability to a system answerable to no one but itself. They are

based on some fundamental principles: Rely on what works. And when possible, decentralize. Institute choice to force competition into the system. Give people more power to make the big decisions in their lives. Make the system accountable. And understand the new realities of America's global position, that we must become more competitive. We are not going to retreat into the failed policies of uninvolvedness, disengagement, isolation, protectionism. We cannot do that. That would shrink markets and throw people out of work in this country. Staying involved, then, is the fundamental answer on international trade. These are the important ways to reform and change our country.

Chairman Fondren once said that "Leadership requires forthrightness. Hidden agendas rarely, if ever, lead to progress and very often succeed in spoiling the brew." Well, I've never been very good at hiding an agenda, and I'm not about to try to start that now.

The agenda has really been to create jobs, protect the family, and promote world peace. Too many times I run up against a stone wall, a partisan guard more determined to take sides than to move the country forward. So, March 20th will be an important date. And if the Congress enacts my action plan on the economy by then, the real beneficiaries will be the American people. If the Congress cannot act, or if it sends to me a bill that it knows today that I cannot and will not sign, I will take this case to the American people and say: The problem is the Congress. Send a new Congress to Washington next November. But before that, I want to see us move something forward. I want to see us get something done.

And it's tough in an election year. I know that; I'm involved right up to my neck, just recovering from eight of these darn things yesterday. So, I'm not being unrealistic, but I think we still have time to set aside the politics and try to pass something that most economists agree—I think all economists agree—would stimulate this economy and get this country back to work again. In the meantime, I will act on my own in the interests of the American people.

I drew a line in the sand, Gene referred to it, a little over a year ago in the Gulf. When you look back, that wasn't an easy decision. But we kept our word, and we liberated a tiny country. And in the process, we sent the world, the whole world, a message. And the message was: Aggression will not stand. And that message is clearly understood. And because that message is so clearly understood, we have a newfound credibility all around, all around the world. Travel abroad, and find out that we are the United States, second to none.

And so now, in a figurative stance, I've drawn a line in the sand again, right here in our own backyard. And I will keep my word again, and if we all do our part, we can ensure that our economy and our country get back on the right track.

In the meantime, keep up the wonderful work that these associations do. Government can do a lot. I know I've got to do it better. I know that Congress has to do its work better. But it can never replace that thing that de Tocqueville found so amazing about this country, association, the

propensity of one American to help another.

And when I talk about Points of Light, sometimes my critics say, "Well, he's simply forgoing his responsibility. He's simply trying to lay off on the back of private citizens the responsibility of a Government." That's the farthest thing from my mind when I commend you and thank you for being Points of Light. Government can help. Government must help. Government must reach out a hand to those that are hurting. But it is the Points of Lights, it is the private sector, it is the associations that are going to make a difference in the lives of the men and women and, especially, the children of this country.

So, may God bless you for your work. And thank you for letting me come back.

*Note: The President spoke at 1:10 p.m. at the Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Gene Fondren and R. William Taylor, chairman and president of the American Society of Association Executives.*

## Remarks at the Richard Nixon Library Dinner

March 11, 1992

Mr. President, thank you, sir, for that wonderfully warm introduction. I, like I think everybody across our country, was once again so impressed when we saw what you did today in outlining foreign policy objectives of this country. And it's a wonderful privilege for me to be introduced by you.

If you will excuse me a little reminiscence, why, in '64, I ran with a spectacular lack of success for the United States Senate. In 1966, I started off to run for the Congress in Houston, Harris County. And it was then Richard Nixon, former Vice President, President-to-be, who came down there to kick off my little campaign. And I thought I was right on top of the world. And what he did in endorsing and supporting me and many others like me that year resulted in our picking up some 49 seats, I think it was, in the Congress and propelling me into

a life that has been full and fascinating, sometimes frustrating but always rewarding. And I am very, very grateful to him then; I was grateful to him when I served while he was President, while I was head of the Republican National Committee. And I value his advice today. I get it. I appreciate it. And I'm very grateful to him for his continued leadership in this area that is so vital to the United States of America. So, Mr. President, my sincere thanks. And it's a great privilege to be here tonight.

And of course, I want to thank our friend, all of our friend, Jim Schlesinger, for his leadership on this; and Walter and Lee Annenberg for their fantastic support; of course, Julie and David Eisenhower over there. I agree with everything Jim Schlesinger said about Julie, first-class and wonder-